

VZCZCXYZ0002  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBP #0696 3021624  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 291624Z OCT 09  
FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0838  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0189

UNCLAS BAMAKO 000696

SIPDIS

EEB/TPP/MTAA/ABT ANN RYAN

OFFICE OF THE COUNSELOR ROBERT HAGEN

TO JOHN TUMINARO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: EAGR EAID ETRD ML

SUBJECT: PARTNERING FOR GLOBAL HUNGER AND FOOD SECURITY

REF: STATE 107298

¶1. (U) On October 20 DCM and POL/ECON Chief met with Malian Minister of Agriculture Aghatam Ag Alhassane to deliver the letter from the Secretary regarding the opportunity of the November 16-18 World Food Summit to build on the momentum of the September 26 event through timely endorsement of the five principles for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to end global hunger. The proposal Partnering for Food Security: Moving Forward was also left behind. The DCM highlighted the President's and the Secretary's vision and goals for combating hunger and increasing sustainable levels of food security.

¶2. (SBU) Ag Alhassane expressed appreciation for the message, noting Mali largely agreed with the five principles. The Minister seized on the point that agriculture is inextricably linked to climate change, noting that in the North of Mali rainfall is generally inadequate, but increasingly perceived to be too much in one place and much less, even than normal, in another. He said the Government is seeking to encourage two or even three harvests of rice in areas where there is adequate water, but also as insurance against bad growing seasons.

¶3. (SBU) He also mentioned the need to add value to agricultural production: it would encourage farmers to grow corn if they could sell their crop to local millers who converted the corn into meal or flour, rather than facing the risk that it will rot before it can be sold. He noted that in Bamako stores targeting Western consumers, corn flakes and other breakfast cereals sell for a lot of money, while locally produced corn is for the most part eaten fresh off the cob, when in season.

¶4. (SBU) The Minister added that the lack of adequate roads is a problem all over Mali, but particularly in the North. He said that when he grew up in Gao, in Eastern Mali, before there was a road. When the first mango showed up, by boat along the Niger River, it was always towards the end of the season, but in spite of the fact that the fruit was tired and bruised, the first mango was always a huge, welcome event. Since the road to Gao was built, however, the region opened up to economic activity, and now produce can sometimes even be bought more cheaply than in the capital, Bamako. The Minister used this anecdote to illustrate his point that building a road to Kidal, in the north, would have a tremendously positive effect on agricultural development and by proxy, military as well as food security.

¶5. (SBU) Embassy Bamako would like to add a note regarding investment in country-led plans: on October 13 Mali scored a particular success in being the first country in the region to sign a Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) pact with the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union. Mali's success came in no small measure as a result of USAID and its partner Michigan State University. USAID provided technical support to carry out studies to diagnose the successes and failures

of past approaches and carry out simulations of the impacts of alternative agricultural investment and growth paths on poverty reduction. USAID also helped raise the political profile of the process.

MILOVANOVIC